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THE CRAYON.

NEW YORK, JANUARY, 1861.

Sketchings.

ANNUAL ADDRESS TO OUR READERS AND FRIENDS.

THE commencement of a new volume, and of a new year incidental thereto, beget the pleasant duty of saying a few words to our friends and readers.

To one and all no better fortune can await them than that which grows out of our wishes for them. If the steps of life are rugged for all and difficult to mount, they are particularly so in these days for a journalist of our class. We ride no political hobbies, cater to no political factions, serve no party purposes, and expect, consequently, no political reward. If we cannot sustain ourselves by seeking to unite people, we certainly shall not do so by maliciously trying to divide them for mere personal interest, and at the expense of national well-being. We cannot laugh with the rich and hardened political fanatic, while we know that the humble and forgotten poor are wanting bread to eat and necessary clothing to wear—we cannot excite ourselves with absurd and morbid reveries about the African, at the expense of the healthy growth of thirty millions of our race—we cannot push back the legitimately flowing currents of a young nation, or shed tears over the imaginary woes of the Southern slave, while the northern laborer and his family are threatened with starvation, and are bowed down bondsmen to their own vital necessities, to which society is but too often indifferent.

Already the country overflows with persons of this stamp, worthy descendants of that class so immortally rebuked in the New Testament by "one of many sorrows and borne down with grief." In fact, what are nearly all our public men and public journals but breeders of discord through personal interest or right down idiocy of brain—idealess vagrants who multiply words in proportion to their lack of sense. What are most of our pulpits but masked instruments of irrational distinctions, bigoted denunciations and unchristian dissensions?

Into these sweltering cauldrons of national disgrace we have neither been cast by taste, interest nor journalistic calling. We have only to move along the quiet, nay, obscure pathways of Art, the important though too often neglected handmaiden of our best culture. The social neglect of Art is but too often the forerunner of sad penalties both publicly and privately. Better far would it be for our young people to study and improve the social conditions which art consecrates than to fall down and worship the false idols of the brain that grow out of the petty ambitions and utilitarian projects of corrupt politicians.

What are we all clamoring for! What are we growling about! Our institutions are good enough for their time and place—perhaps too good; our territory is large enough and fertile enough—perhaps too large and too fertile. What poison, therefore, is madly working

in our blood? Has too much prosperity, too much animal ease brought us to the verge of national lunacy? Are our brains diseased, our hearts corrupted? Is our education, our training, our disciplinarian below our material success? We fear it is so. We are spoiled children. The rod of Providence is suspended, his teachings unheeded. But sooner or later we shall be taught a solemn lesson; the day of affliction, of calamity is destined to come upon us. Humbled and humiliated, we shall be austere taught our duty to ourselves and to others, shall be whipped into that category of mourning and overthrown nations which lend such a melancholy interest to the page of history.

We are now, good reader, about to enter on a new year and a new volume of our periodical, when every agent of our national prosperity is depressed, every spring of our national machinery relaxed. Can we count on your hearty sympathy and support, your cordial aid in continuing our undertaking, in trying to make the CRAYON in every way worthy of the cause it seeks to serve. We have effected many improvements in the plan of this year's issue. The paper is much better, the printing is better, and the shape of it, we think, more agreeable to the eye. Our columns shall be more varied, entertaining and instructive, the result of additional contributors. To artists and their works we shall give a liberal share of our time and columns, and shall make it a point to put fairly before the public every art production entitled to their attention or in any way creditable to the art-producing genius of our country.

If the study and reverence of Art may not make our people rich, it certainly may give them the taste to make better use of their riches and their time, and draw them aside from the many national and local delusions which are constantly springing up amongst us like epidemics.

DOMESTIC ART GOSSIP.

A RETROSPECTIVE glance at recent foreign art-journals brings into view some important matters previously overlooked. Among them is the German artists' assembly at Dusseldorf last August, under the banner of the *Kunstgenossenschaft*, or in English, Art-confederacy, an association organized five years ago for the encouragement and protection of art in Germany. The first meeting was held at Dusseldorf, since which meetings have been held successively at Bingen, Stuttgart and Munich, and always with growing interest. At these meetings, composed of German artists of every school, the cause of national art is discussed and plans developed for its advancement, and there are fêtes, banquets, sports, conversazioni and exhibitions, all of which social elements are indispensable to every cause that would succeed in these days. These occasions bring out of their isolated life the strongest and most elevated artistic minds, men who are generally cloaked up under the reserve of personal dignity and absorbed in their own pursuits, men who require and respond to public feeling, when manifested and shaped so as to serve as a bridge over the petty interests and cabals of common intercourse. A demonstration like this is the most

effective one that artists can make. It is conducted with an independent spirit; no favors are asked of external powers, and especially of governments, the most delusive and debasing of all aids that artists seek. Among the projects matured by the association, are Grand National Exhibitions, an Artists' Fund and a Literary Organ, the association wisely aiming to control every branch of art-encouragement.

If American artists do not pursue a similar course, and watch over the interests of their calling, they will soon be lost in the crowd of art speculators, and subject to all the evils of the European picture-dealing system. The dealer now presents exhibitions as large as any got up by institutions; he controls our superficial newspapers, using them at will to puff his wares and to help him to palm off spurious productions. All he has to do is to call himself an "institution" and pay the press to indorse him and the people believe it. In Europe, the picture dealers' operations are in a measure innocuous, because the press there knows how far to sustain him and when to check him; here, the press, in art matters, is too grossly ignorant to know what its duty is in this respect. The way to master both press and dealer, is for artists to concentrate their energies and strive to lead public taste by an improved institutional organization. In this connection we report a suggestion made to us lately. Let the two art institutions of New York and Philadelphia, the National Academy of Design and the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, the only independent art institutions we have, hold exhibitions alternately in their respective cities, one every other year, the openings to be accompanied with an assembly of artists and social adjuncts, like those of the German gathering, to the extent and of a kind that the state of society here permits. This is the most important feature. Then let there be an association formed (or the present national association modified) so as to embrace and control such projects as properly belong to institutional action, an Artist's Fund, a literary organ and the publication of valuable works, if need be. The popular Receptions may be left to local administration and to maintain the interest of the public in art in the intervals of the biennial exhibitions. These comprise the chief points of the suggestion. When other cities establish institutions of equal magnitude to the art institutions of New York and Philadelphia, and can secure equally remunerative audiences, the exhibitions may be extended to them. There is a threefold purpose in the feature of biennial exhibitions, namely, to give artists more time to complete important works, to reduce the number and increase the quality of pictures exhibited, and to strengthen public taste by making the two largest communities in the country equally interested in its advancement. Fresh exhibitions and the novelty of an artists' congress are powerful stimulants to public curiosity. The scientific world is resorting to meetings of this kind as a means of advancing its interests, and why should not the artistic world do the same? These matters are worthy the attention of artists if they would keep pace with the spirit of the age. We hope that they will reflect over them and discuss them freely.

NEW YORK.—First among the exhibitions demanding notice at our hands is the Jarves Collection, and mainly on account of the pretensions put forth in its behalf. Waiving any reply to these, we give our opinion of the collection and some ideas suggested by it, as Messrs. Eastlake, Black, Trollope and others have done in the letters and certificates appended to the catalogue. We are ready to grant value, if not originality, to pictures of Byzantine character, Nos. 1 and 10 inclusive, and the same to Nos. 38, 40, 43, 44, 55, 57, 58, 59, 61, 68 (many of which are positively stated to be by eminent masters), on the ground of their archaeological interest. Whether genuine or not, they present an idea of the practice of art in certain interesting periods of its development. We presume that most of the certificates alluded to above are based upon the merits, such as they are, of this portion of the collection. As to the balance of the collection, we cannot see much value in it, inherently or relatively. We think it presumption, at all events, to attribute the pictures catalogued as by Fra Angelico, Raphael, Domenichino, Giorgione, Murillo, Velasquez, etc., to these artists. We question the originality of the Rubens sketch and the Madonna of Da Vinci, both being, in any event, very poor specimens of these artists' genius. In our judgment, the value of a collection of "old masters" to this public depends entirely upon the *best* examples of old-master genius, not poor ones; and again, to meet the historical plea, a complete instead of an incomplete succession of them. We insist, furthermore, on the intrinsic excellence of pictures as a standard of acceptance, and repudiate any attempt to pass them off by the indorsement of conventional authorities. If authority is wanted in such cases, let it be one who is on familiar terms with the true, the beautiful and the good in the art of his own day; in our experience he is the best judge of the art of the past; of this description of authority we have found none to indorse the value of the Jarves collection. Our opinion is that the sum of money required to purchase the Jarves collection would educate the public to much greater advantage if devoted to procuring the much finer works of art that are now produced by our own artists.

In confirmation of the opinion that the public are better instructed by the art of the day than by any other art, we would appeal to the recent exhibition of the Artist's Fund Society. Rarely have we seen such a choice collection of American artistic effort and so good an opportunity to estimate its range. This collection was suggestive, demonstrating beyond question a steady, powerful growth of our young school, its merits challenging comparison with those of any other school in the same range of performances. Leutze's "Knight of Seyn" and "Incident in the Life of Tasso," Lambdin's "Lazy Bones," Gray's "Truth," Peele's "Bulfinch" and "Spring Flowers," Johnson's "Prayer" and "Mating," Woodville's "Card Players" and "Chess Players," Huntington's "Head of a Lady," Hick's "Italia," Baker's "Heads," Hennessey's "Alone," for figure subjects; and in landscape, Cole's "Lake Nemi" and "New England Scenery," Gifford's "Autumnal Sunset," Hubbard's "Moozalamoo—Lake Duamore," Inman's "Rydal Falls," Church's "South America," Casi-

lear's "Reminiscence of Switzerland," Snydam's "Twilight" and "Long Island," Kensett's "Foggy Morning in December," and others, furnish proof incontrovertible. Every production named the public can understand and value. On comparing works in the Artist's Fund collection with a similar class of subjects in the French exhibition, we cannot perceive any shortcomings in American art. Of the landscapes mentioned above, there is not one we would part with to obtain the best landscape exhibited in the French gallery. If the American works don't conform to the French standard of execution, they are not open to the charge of studied carelessness, nor do they strike one as having all emerged from one studio. There is more earnestness and more elevation in the American school, and good enough execution to make these high qualities of art apparent. We would say the same of the merits respectively of the French and American figure-subjects. Adopting a recognized standard of appreciation, we have to ask what person, possessing poetic feeling and the means of gratifying it, would pass Leutze's "Knight of Seyn," to expend thousands of dollars for Gerome's "Gladiators," a perfectly executed painting of a bad subject, or for Leys' "Early Days of the Reformation," a lifeless, labored treatment of a good subject. Do any of the imitations of drapery and the graceful attitudes of male and female nonentities in the cabinet pictures of French *petite* art suggest ideas or excite pleasure like that we get from Peele's "Bulfinch" or Hennessy's "Alone." Such tests of art, if not tests of commercial importance, are better worth investigation than a dealer's price list. We are not disposed to institute comparisons between artists' works or between schools, but they are sometimes necessary in order to expose the shallowness of conventional judgment. Let those who visited both exhibitions, the Artist's Fund and the French gallery, recall the impressions derived from each and judge for themselves of the character of the American school.

We gather from a foreign art journal an important item that had not previously reached our ears. It is said that one of our New York wealthiest *constructeurs* "is going to form a gallery of ancient and modern pictures on a grand scale. He is now on the Continent, and has acquired many fine things in England, France and Germany, especially in Dusseldorf and Munich. He has devoted 200,000 dollars to the formation of his gallery, and there is no doubt but that his example will be followed by many others." We can imagine the picture dealers on the Continent on the *qui vive* for this gentleman, advertised as he is in a widely circulated periodical.

Quite pleased are we that the common council have purchased the sandstone image of Washington in front of the City Hall. In these days of disunion and uncompromising patriotism, of Japanese swindles, of popular standards of truth, of religious politics and political religion, of bogus picture dealing and the new sperm-candle order of architecture, a public symbol of art is requisite to typify feeling no language can describe; some visible, comprehensive sign of it is necessary in order to represent to posterity the substance of our

social faith. Posterity will know something about Washington, and something about Art, and it will be able by this sandstone image to know something about what our generation knew of them. This sandstone image might have snapped, cracked and crumbled away, and have been forgotten, exposed to time, and to frost, and to the tender mercies of boot-black boys, had it not touched a chord of sympathy in the breast of aldermen, had it not been hallowed by the elect of the people as an ideal conception of our country's saviour. Monuments of art reflect the state of a people's civilization better than its literature. The sandstone image performs this office for our generation. It is a suitable illustration to any text that describes the official acts and motives of this day. May it not crumble away so long as symbols can convey meaning too subtle for the ordinary grasp of language!

Hicks has completed a full-length portrait of the Hon. Rufus King, late Governor of the State of New York; also a portrait of Mayor Tiemann, both pictures commissioned by the city for the Governor's Room in the City Hall.—Mr. A. S. Ritchie, the well-known engraver, employs the brush effectively, judging by "Mercy at the Wicket gate," a subject taken from Pilgrim's Progress. This work is fine in sentiment, well-composed and well-colored.—We would call the attention of admirers of photographs to a series of views and studies taken in the White Mountains, published by Bierstadt Brothers, of New Bedford, Mass. The plates are of large size and are remarkably effective. The artistic taste of Mr. Albert Bierstadt, who selected the points of view, is apparent in them. No better photographs have been published in this country.

The regular Reception, of the Artists' Reception Association (of which there will be but two this season), will take place at Dodworth's Hall on the evenings of January 10th, and February 21st. G. A. Baker, W. Oliver Stone and Launt Thompson, Committee.

Literary Record.

LIFE OF ANDREW JACKSON. (3d vol.) By James Parton. Mason Brothers, publishers, New York.

The clever author of this entertaining but bulky volume has brought his arduous labors to a close. He seems to have ransacked every work in which anything relating to Jackson was to be found. It would, indeed, be difficult to read his work without forming a very high estimate of the extent and diligence of his researches. Not the least entertaining portion of this valuable work is the spicy gossip with which it abounds. Through this we get true glimpses of Washington society during Jackson's administration. Jackson evolves as the great central figure from first to last; but the work has superior claims as an epitome of the political stage on which Jackson figured so prominently. As such it has no equal for completeness. Mr. Parton brings us face to face with the old hero, as he is familiarly called, during the most stirring events of a life now fixed in the feelings of the nation as one of the prominent elements of our political history; and this he does in a pleasant yet impressive manner.